



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission

MEETING MINUTES

July 12, 2011 | 7:30 p.m.

Attendance

Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Commissioners: Daphne Collins (Chair), Jack Leader (Secretary), David Abromowitz, Jane Ives, Ronald Lipof, John Pears, Philip Plottel

Staff: Amanda Stout

Candace Havens
Director
Planning & Development

Guests: Ald. Vicki Danberg, Bill Renke

Absent: Chris Steele (Vice Chair), Barry Abramson, Charles Eisenberg, Robert Gifford, Peter Kai Jung Lew, Joyce Moss, Darryl Settles

Amanda Stout
Senior Economic
Development Planner

Agenda Items

1. Newton Centre Retail Overlay

- Ald. Vicki Danberg brought forward a proposal that is currently being discussed by Aldermen and City staff to consider the creation of retail overlay districts in Newton Centre and potentially other villages. The proposal would amend Chapter 30 of the Zoning Ordinance to restrict certain business uses from the ground floor (street level), allowing them only by special permit, within the village center overlay. The genesis of the proposal was the reaction to a large concentration of certain business uses, primarily banks and financial institutions and hair and nail salons, in Newton Centre and other village centers. This proposal will likely be raised at the Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) of the Board of Aldermen, and the Public Hearing would be an opportunity for the EDC and others to comment on the proposal (though the item is not yet scheduled for discussion or hearing by ZAP). The purpose of this discussion was to raise the topic and seek general input from the EDC, but not to obtain an official EDC position on the topic.

- Commissioners discussed some of the pros, cons, and nuances of the proposal, including financial uses that are primarily “office” and those that are “retail” and the suggested size of ground floor lobby space. Members questioned whether the City should try to incentivize certain uses, rather than make it more difficult for other uses and discussed how this proposal might enhance village vitality.

2. EDC Business

- Daphne Collins read aloud a new “Code of Conduct” for City commissions and committees.

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3. Priority Setting Workshop

- Daphne introduced the discussion, noting a desire to identify specific challenges and specific solutions that the EDC might tackle to assist business development in Newton.
- Amanda Stout reviewed the Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) and distributed a sample of questions to stimulate discussion. The questions will be discussed in more detail in the fall.
- Commissioners brainstormed ideas – primarily short-term, easy to implement programs, tools, workshops, incentives, and techniques – to further economic development in Newton. Commissioners will continue to think of such ideas in the month ahead, Daphne and Amanda will compile a master list, and the ideas will be discussed at the August meeting and might lead to the formation of subcommittees to take action.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Stout, AICP

Sr. Economic Development Planner